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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

M.V.A. FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

by

Greig S. Rasmussen

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF VISUAL ARTS

IN

PAINTING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

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<u>TITLE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>MEDIUM</u>	<u>SIZE</u>
'THE GREY RAIN'	1986	ACRYLIC ON CANVAS	24" X 67 1/2"

It is out of a desire to concentrate, as completely as possible, on issues of color and surface/texture, that these paintings have developed. Having chosen to work within the clearly established limits of separate vertical panels of pre-determined size (12", 14", and 28" wide x 84" high), I am thereby afforded a greater painterly freedom. Issues of form and image become resolved by and through the working process, facilitating a freedom to focus on color and textural interrelationships as the primary concern.

Starting from the premise that: in nature, as well as in painting, color and surface/texture are inseparable though distinguishable, I attempt to find a surface/texture that 'belongs' with each color.* Color, texture, and therefore light, are of one cloth -- a materialism of the intangible. This is not to deny that I treat of illusion, but as the painter Brice Marden once wrote:

"You deal with illusion. But it's not illusion about things that you see. It's an illusion of an abstraction of things that you see."**

*Thus, the fact that in my most recent paintings the physical texture has tended to lessen is, I believe, more a function of those particular colors and color relationships, than an indication of any diminished importance viz. texture and surface; in any case, 'smoothness' is itself a textural property.

**Brice Marden: Paintings, Drawings and Prints 1975-1980, Exhibition Catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery; London, 1981, Pg. 55.

I try and balance a painting in terms of light, and visual and emotional weight (mood). Such a balance is purely intuitive and aims at an organic unity between and across the panels -- the interrelation of formal and emotive elements, integrated into a (formal) stasis that simultaneously -- and almost paradoxically -- remains dynamic. (The dynamism is a function of the heterogeneous variety of the elements therein integrated.)

The utilization of multiple vertical panels is a way of gaining lateral extension without sacrificing frontality, and the interplay of strict frontality and verticality in these paintings harkens back to the essential re-discovery of the power of this dialectic by Newman and Rothko (who in turn found it in icons and Late Gothic - Early Renaissance painting).*

Working within self-imposed limitations gives rise to an art of compression: means are concentrated so as to focus on the primary concerns of color, surface/texture, and consequently, expression. (This is precisely why issues of pre-established 'image' are of no concern in these paintings; an 'image' -- in so far as one can speak of an image viz. these paintings -- is arrived at directly through the process of combining separate

*Coupling verticality with frontality and lateral extension gives rise to interval, to rhythm, and this remains a critical factor in color and surface/texture choice.

color panels.) Such formal limitations do not rule out complexity but rather facilitate it, while at the same time ruling out gratuitousness. Nor do such limitations entail simplicity, but instead entail clarity.

One aspect of these limitations is the restriction of drawing to its most basic functions: division and delineation. Drawing in these paintings is, apart from paint application perhaps, reduced to the line formed by the physical abutment of the panels. Here edge functions as a threshold of passage, facilitating the movement from one panel to another -- an intellectual/aesthetic movement. Simultaneously edge (drawing) functions as the boundaries of each panel, thus serving in a delineating capacity.*

The painter's (formal) language, as I conceive it, does not 'disguise' or 'interpret' or somehow 'translate' thought; rather, it is itself the vehicle of thought -- a way of thinking. In this sense, painting is a way of thinking for me and not only one of communication. A painting begins through reflection on

*By working with internal edge as linear abutment, only the edge of a panel is allowed to form a linear division; consequently, the rest of the panel remains free, so to speak. Therefore the colored panels are in no way stripes, i.e. colored 'lines', but truly color panels. In the same way, because the boundaries of the panels are physical, and not merely 'drawn', the area of a painting wherein a specific color is placed (including the shape of that area), and the color itself, function together as a single entity. In other words, the traditional distinction between container and contained, ground and figure, becomes a relation of identity. A panel is not a place where a particular

experience and on the possibilities inherent in color and texture, and is finished when, through the actualization of one set of possibilities, a unity and presence has been achieved.

My aim in these paintings is for an emotive impact, but one achieved without didactic narrative and thus, without the specific use of symbols. This is a question of presence, not just one of effect, and herein lie the contemplative and emotive aspects of these paintings; works to be felt, so to speak, through the eyes.

color in a particular shape are put, but rather, the panel is the color and shape. Thus, no one panel or group of panels can be read as 'figure' against or within a 'ground' formed by the remaining panels in a painting; the whole painting is 'figure' or is 'ground', one might say.

LIST OF SLIDES

1.	<u>De Profundis</u>	5 panels	84"h x 77 1/2"w	1986
2.	<u>The Grey Rain</u>	4 panels	84"h x 67 1/2"w	1986
3.	<u>Blue Winds</u>	3 panels	84"h x 55 1/2"w	1986
4.	<u>Angeleco's Light</u>	4 panels	84"h x 55 1/4"w	1986
5.	<u>Easter Grey</u>	5 panels	84"h x 63 1/2"w	1986

All works: Acrylic on Canvas

